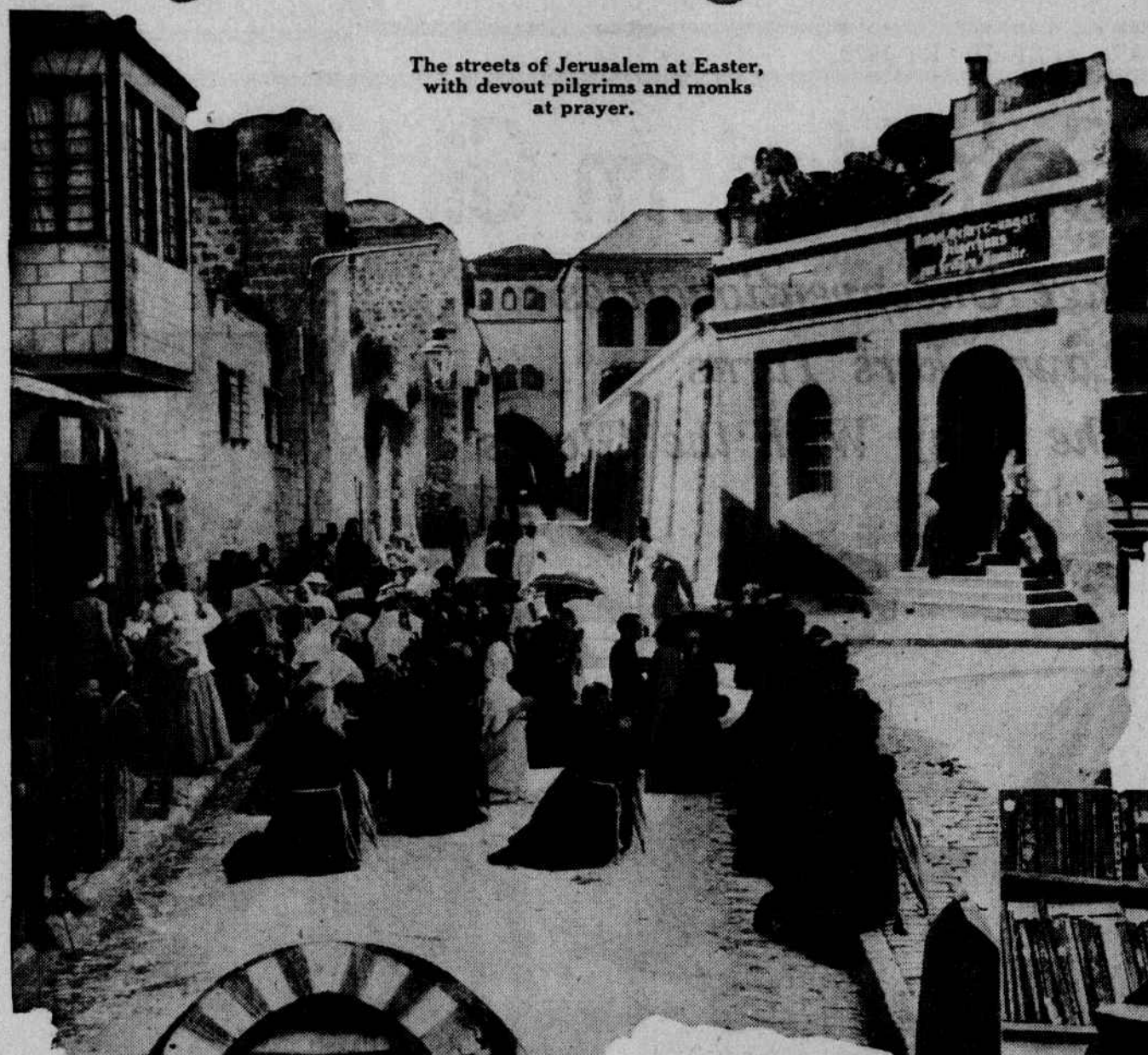


Holy Week in Holy Land with Many Strange Peoples

Christians Celebrating Their Easter, Jews the Passover, and Arabs the Feast of Moses, Crowd Jerusalem in Confused, but Devout, Prayerful Mobs

The streets of Jerusalem at Easter, with devout pilgrims and monks at prayer.



have arrived, when the pitiful bleat of lambs about to be slaughtered heralds the preparation for the feast.

On the broad plateau on top of the mountain the Samaritans are assembled. Water is boiling in the large kettles all ready for the sacrifice. Prayer rugs are spread out and twelve Samaritans dressed in white linen kneel at a signal from their two priests, who prostrate themselves before them, bow their heads until they touch the ground. It looks like a tableau from far off centuries, as the Samaritans offer up their prayer on the top of the mountain in the dim light of the setting sun.

They rise and seven sheep are led into the inclosure, "males of the first year, without blemish." In a minor rhythmic strain

about the time of the Crusades, because he felt that too many Christians were coming to Jerusalem for Easter who might thereby constitute a political peril. So as not to have the Moslems outnumbered he instituted this festival to coincide with the Orthodox Easter, which would bring a host of Moslems into Jerusalem.

The Arabs pouring into Jerusalem for the "Nebi Musa" festival present a kaleidoscope of color that is quite dazzling. The Bedouin women, in their red and yellow coarsely embroidered finery, are particularly striking. This year another attempt is made to enter inside the old city at the Jaffa Gate, but the way is blocked by the thin line of British troops.

The large body of Hebronite Arabs make their way around the outside of the city walls, dancing and whining a weird chant, accompanied by the beating of tom toms and clapping of hands in a measured beat, their leader performing gyrations with a huge curved sword.

The banners carried in the procession are blessed and brought from Mecca each year, and they are blessed again by the Mufti on the top of the Mount of Olives, after which the parade moves on. The flutes break into a melancholy wailing this time and the dancing dervishes revolve and revolve, their skirts opening out like an umbrella. This performance takes place at frequent intervals and lasts about twenty minutes, and the dancers look like spinning tops as they whirl around until some of them foam at the mouth. The whole pilgrimage is made on foot and lasts about three days, during which time they do not partake of food.

When Jericho is reached they place the blessed banners on the supposed grave of Moses, in spite of the fact that the exact whereabouts of the burial place of Moses is distinctly disclaimed in the Bible: Deut. chap. 34, v. 6, "And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab over against Bethpeor: But no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day."

The first day of Paschal or Easter Week for the Christian starts with Palm Sunday

chanting, as they escort the priests in the descent from the mount.

They take the road which leads to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and when they reach there they find the sides of the quadrangle court before the place lined with vendors and fakirs selling sticky sweets, all kinds of relics, holy pictures, brilliant colored glass bracelets, mother of pearl crosses from Bethlehem and other small ornaments made of olive wood from Jerusalem.

During the night, before the crowd begins to assemble, a platform, upon which are two benches, is placed in the courtyard. On each bench is a row of six cushioned seats. On a dais, gained by a step and carpeted in red and gold, stands a gilt throne, in front of which are placed a great ewer, a gold tray and a very large white towel. Against the wall of the court, near the platform, there is a flight of wooden steps painted green, which lead to a small pulpit. In the center of the pulpit is a picture of Jesus washing the feet of the twelve Apostles.

By morning the pavements are echoing with ceaselessly tramping feet and every one and everything has the appearance of the great festive occasion that is about to take place. At 9 o'clock comes a crash of bells and, fairly blazing with jewels, the Greek Patriarch emerges from the church, attended by his Bishops and priests. The procession ascends the dais and in a loud voice a high official reads from the Gospel of St. John the account of Jesus washing His Disciples' feet.

That night the way to the Garden of Gethsemane is lighted with candles and the people pass along the different Stages of the Cross, until the garden is reached.

The Holy Fire ceremony, conducted by the Greek Orthodox on the afternoon of Good Friday, is perhaps the most remarkable of all rites performed in the church of the Holy Sepulcher. Under the rotunda of the church the members of the consular, the military and diplomatic parties are seated. Every chapel and corridor, every space and corner is jammed with people.

Upper left—Doorway to the mosque under which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are supposed to be buried. Lower left—Typical Arab tribesmen. Above (left)—The Jewish prayer scroll. Above (right)—Learned rabbi preparing for the Passover. Right—Religious procession attracting thousands.

By Leonie Nathan and George M. H. Hyman.

JERUSALEM is thronged with natives and pilgrims, and all roads leading into the Holy City are filled with eager, hurrying crowds, some having come thousands of weary miles over terrible roads, many having walked every foot of the way, begging their food from village to village. But these hardships all mean so little compared to the reward at the journey's end. The square near Jaffa Gate and around David's Tower, which is the entrance to the old city, becomes choked with the gayly colored, strangely garbed, excited multitude, surging backward and forward, opening a passage now and then to let a donkey load jostle by. It is Holy Week; Christian, Moslem and Jew have come to participate in the feast of feasts at the most sacred place on earth, where a thousand years are as but a day, and where past and present meet.

Suddenly some one in the crowd starts a loud and monotonous chant in a minor key and the others take it up, until it sounds like a fierce roll of thunder, which is interrupted from time to time by shouts from the more fanatical pilgrims, who recite:

"God has come to earth to-day.
We are saved by His blood;
We are glad,
But the Jews are sad."

However, the Jews, in their quarters, are not sad. For weeks they have been preparing for the Passover, which every few years falls due the same time as the Christian Easter. A great spring housecleaning takes place in every Jewish home and industrious housewives have been kept busy scrubbing the stone floors of their little rooms, assisted by their young daughters, who chatter along in their wooden clogged workshoes as they bring pails of water from the pumps in front of the long rows of houses. Every stitch of linen is washed, houses are swept and garnished and almost every household article is laid on windows and balconies to air and dry.

The women work themselves almost to exhaustion getting ready for their Holy Week feast—the Pesach, or Jewish Passover. Trailing bands of Chaluzim are among the pilgrims on the roads leading into Jerusalem. They are the courageous Jewish university students who were oppressed in Europe and who have come to Palestine to help build up their "promised land." Some come in big farm wagons and some come on foot, reviving the Oleh Regel Passover Pilgrimage of Biblical days.

When the evening of the "Feast of Unleavened Bread" arrives each Jewish family gathers around the table for the Seder service. The youngest in the family, who may have been seen several days before sauntering about the street rehearsing his *Mah Nishtanah* at the top of his voice, asks the "four questions" concerning the reasons for the institution of the festival of the Passover, and the paterfamilias goes off into the customary lengthy discourse on the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. On the Seder eve, if you go through the moonlit streets of the Jewish section of Jerusalem, you will find all the doors of the happy little households open to admit the spirit of the prophet Elijah.

One of the most stirring sights of the Jewish festivities is the service at the *Kotel Maarove*, more familiarly known

as the "Wailing Wall"—the only remaining wall of King Solomon's Temple. It is the only sacred spot left to the Jews in Palestine outside of Rachel's grave, for even the Cave of Machpelah, the burial place of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has a mosque over it, which no Jews or Christians, except extremely high personages, are permitted to enter. It is touching to see how the pious old Jews sob their prayers here, their faces buried in the crevices of the wall, weeping at this last vestige of the golden age of Israel.

A rare sight is the Samaritan Passover, held on Mount Gerizim, overlooking Nablus, the stronghold of the Arabs, who in this district are so fanatical that until recently not even a Christian woman could venture abroad unless her face was covered. The Samaritans who live there are apparently unmolested, however, and are given ample police protection for their Passover ceremonies, previous to which they dwell in tents on Mount Gerizim for a whole month. A large number of the townspeople climb the mountain to witness the slaughter of the Paschal lamb. Mount Gerizim is so steep that not even a donkey can keep to the narrow path, and the stony climb is so difficult that it is a wonder the priests in Biblical times did not call this rocky altitude "the Mount of Cursing." Instead of Ebal, the mountain opposite. Just before sunset all the spectators, including the British Governor and his family, some long haired Greek priests and several members of the American Zionist Medical Unit,

Samaritan psalms are sung, sounding like the chants used in the liturgy of the ancient or Oriental Sephardic Hebrew, to which the sacred tongue of the Samaritans, both in script and pronunciation, is very similar. A long speech in Arabic is made by one of the younger men, giving the history of the Passover; telling how, according to the command in the Book of Exodus, "On the tenth of this month they shall take for themselves every man a lamb, according to the houses of their fathers, a lamb for every household: and if the household be too small for a lamb, the family shall join in company with its neighbor who lives nearest to his house according to the numbers of souls," and on the fourteenth day of the month, "the whole company of the children of Israel shall kill it at evening. . . . and it shall be a memorial unto you this day" of the deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. Thereupon the ancient commandment is carried out; the sheep are placed in a circle, two men holding each sheep, and two men with long, sharp knives simultaneously cut the throats of the animals, in the manner of the mosaic ritual, so quickly and neatly that the animals feel no pain. Hot water is poured upon the wool, which is rapidly plucked, and the carcasses are placed on long spits over the fire in the deep holes in the ground, which serve as ovens, to roast for several hours for the "feast to the Lord."

The Arab festival, which comes during the Christian Easter week, is known as "Nebi Musa," Arabic for "Prophet Moses." It is of comparatively recent origin, and in reality is a political rather than a religious festival, started by the Sultan Saladin

at cock crow. All night long the weary pilgrims have walked up and down the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and over the rough cobblestones of the narrow streets in Jerusalem, while the clanging of the great bell on the church continues until daybreak. But in the words of the Psalmist: "Weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning." When the sun comes up over the mountains the people, weary and worn with vigils and fastings, march slowly into the church and offer special prayers.

'I've Seen the Holy of Holies,' Cry the Many

Many are overcome with emotion and with hearts ready to break and with weeping eyes they sob out: "I've seen the holy of holies," for they believe their own hands have touched the very place where for three days the Master lay in the flesh. Services at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher last until noon hour, when the people hurry home to their humble lodgings to eat only such food as the restrictions of Lent permit.

At the seventh hour the clergy, with men, women and children following, climb the Mount of Olives, along paths bordered by anemones and shadowed by silvery olive trees, until they reach the summit, and for two hours hymns are sung and chanted, after which the people proceed to the stone of ascension, from which place it is believed the Christ was seen to have risen.

Old and young alike then take a squatting position in the grass, and the children, with branches of olive trees and palms waving gently in rhythmic motion, sing: "Blessed is He That Cometh in the Name of the Lord." The clergy give the signal that the ceremony is over and the people rise and slowly follow, gently singing and

pressed so closely together that one cannot budge a fraction of an inch. The courtyard and the roofs of the surrounding houses, even the belfry, are black with people, all looking down upon one of the strangest sights in the world—the Holy Fire—which is believed to descend from heaven each year upon the tomb of Christ.

Under the center of the dome of the church is the Chapel of the Sepulcher, around which is a narrow aisle kept open by the British military.

After the Chapel of the Sepulcher is encircled three times, the Patriarch, who seems to be master of ceremonies, bends and passes alone through the low arched doorway into the tiny chamber containing the Sepulcher. What happens inside most of us don't know, but whether it be a miracle from heaven or the most blasphemous of impostures, it is all extremely real and true to the multitude. A bell is sounded; the moment has come and the fire spouts out through a small opening in the side of the chapel. There is a great silence throughout the place as the crowd watches the flame appear.

Specially picked men standing near the opening have torches and bundles of long, white wax candles ready to light with the Holy Fire. Another specially selected man is stationed near by to light his torch and ride away to Bethlehem, where the lamps in the Church of Nativity will be lighted with this flame.

Whatever form each different creed may adopt in celebrating its Holy Week the dominant note is the same—it is the spring of the year, the time of freedom, the true resurrection, the dawn of life and hope. To Christian, Moslem and Jew alike Palestine will ever remain the Holy Land, the cradle of so many faiths, for which so many have faith for the future.

